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ABSTRACT

Based on George Orwell's novel "1984," this lesson plan presents activities designed to help students understand that the historical context of the novel is based on the mood and political climate of 1949 Europe; the society Orwell created and modern society in the United States have similarities and differences; and modern privacy issues and the justifications behind privacy violations are subject to debate. The main activity of the lesson involves students working in groups to produce and perform skits on privacy issues. It includes objectives, materials, procedures, adaptations, discussion questions, evaluation methods, extension activities, annotations of suggested readings and web links, vocabulary, and related academic standards and benchmarks addressed in the lesson plan. The lesson plan also contains a description of a video clip related to the lesson, comprehension questions related to the video clip, and answers to those comprehension questions. (RS)

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Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson title:
1984: How Much Fact in Fiction?

Grade level:
9-12, with adaptation for younger students

Subject area:
Literature

Duration:
Four to five class periods. To reduce this lesson to two to four periods, skip the introductory discussions of the novel's historical context and/or have students discuss but not perform skits on privacy issues.

Objectives:
Students will understand the following:

1. The historical context of *1984* is based on the mood and political climate of 1949 Europe.
2. The society Orwell created in *1984* and modern society in the United States have similarities and differences.
3. Modern privacy issues and the justifications behind privacy violations are subject to debate.

Materials:

- Computers with Internet access (optional but very helpful)
- Pens and paper
- Copies of the Classroom Activity Sheet: Privacy Research
- Copies of the Take-Home Activity Sheet: A Question of Privacy

Procedures:

Note to teachers: Many of the issues raised in this lesson are likely to be of great interest to high school students and may spark interesting and potentially rambling discussions. Consider placing time limits on students' comments or on the class discussions as a whole.

1. After students have finished reading *1984* and have discussed their initial reactions to the novel, ask them why they think Orwell wrote this book. What world events were occurring around the time Orwell was writing *1984*? (Let students know that *1984* was published in 1949.) What events had occurred since Orwell's birth in 1903? Help students understand the novel's historical connections. They should be made aware that several events of the early 20th century, including World War I, the Great Depression, Joseph Stalin's rise to power in the Soviet Union, and World War II, contributed to Orwell's mood in writing *1984*. For

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example, in 1949, Stalin was the dictator of the Soviet Union. He ruled by terror and executed millions of people, including people who had helped him rise to power and peasants who opposed his collective agriculture program. Orwell also reacted to the dawn of the nuclear era, beginning with the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bomb changed people's perceptions of the potential outcomes of warfare and made people contemplate the future of the human race.

2. Also make sure students understand that Orwell was displeased not only with Stalinism and the situation in the Soviet Union but also with events and trends in Western Europe and the United States, such as increased technological warfare and the support of noncommunist dictatorships. *1984* was not only an attack against Stalinism but also a statement of dissatisfaction with political trends in the "democratic" world of Western Europe and the United States.

3. Ask students to describe some of the ways in which the world has changed since 1949. What has happened to the distribution of power in Europe? What are some of concerns common in Western Europe today and 1949? Have students take notes during this discussion.

4. Now that students have considered the historical context for Orwell's writing of *1984* and have discussed some of the differences between 1949 and the present, have the class list the novel's primary themes. Students might contribute such words as "freedom," "privacy," "individualism versus the state," or "big government." Write their ideas on the board and have them record the list on their own papers.

5. Ask students whether they ever feel that their privacy is threatened by the government, corporations, the media, or other entities. Have they ever had any experiences in which they felt that their rights to privacy were violated? Has anyone ever been in a situation that is reminiscent of a situation that occurs in *1984*?

6. Write the word "privacy" at the top of the board and then draw a two-column chart with the headings "1984" and "Today." Have students copy the chart onto their own papers. Ask students to contribute examples of privacy restrictions in the novel and in modern society and write their ideas in the appropriate columns. An example chart is illustrated below.

1984	Today
• Telescreens are everywhere (except for where the Proles live and work). • Workplace monitoring—Winston can't look at a note on his desk or dwell too long on a single document. • Thought Police interpret people's	• FBI surveillance • Corporations collecting data on consumers • Internet privacy issues • Drug testing at the workplace or school • Employers monitoring employees' e-mails, phone calls, or bathroom

facial expressions and voice intonations. • Spies—one never knows whom to trust.	usage

Students will probably mention the issue of being monitored at school or by their parents, being prohibited from visiting certain Web sites at home or at school, having their lockers or bedrooms inspected, and so forth. Explain that these issues are a little different from privacy issues in society-at-large because parents are generally accorded the right to monitor their children's behaviors, and the courts have determined schools to be places in which students relinquish some of their constitutional rights. This will probably be a topic of great interest among students, and the conversation may need to be curtailed so that the class can continue with the lesson objectives. Tell the class that the focus of the lesson will be on privacy issues in society-at-large rather then in the specialized "societies" of home and school.

7. Ask students to conduct Internet and/or print research to find out about current privacy-related issues and debates affecting our society. As seemingly endless amounts of information is related to this topic, students will need to limit their time searching and focus on a handful of resources that they think are particularly relevant. The list of sites below provides a good starting point. (You may want to limit research to these sites alone.) As they explore the sites, have students record their findings in the chart provided in the Classroom Activity Sheet: Privacy Research. They should also fill in this chart if they're using print resources instead of the Internet. (For fun, you could have students record the number of times Big Brother is referenced in the modern-day articles they read.)

   General Privacy Issues
   - Privacy is Under Siege at Work, at Home, and Online: http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/001002/nycu/privacy1.htm (be sure to have students follow the links from this article to others)
   - Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: http://www.privacyrights.org (be sure to instruct students to browse through the Fact Sheets)
   - Privacy International: http://www.privacy.org/pi
   - About.com: Privacy Rights: http://civilliberty.about.com/newsissues/civilliberty/cs/privacyrights/index.htm
   - American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): http://www.aclu.org (link to relevant issues)
   - Privacy Law in the USA: http://www.rbs2.com/privacy.htm

   Internet Privacy Issues
   - Cybersurveillance: http://www.discovery.com/stories/technology/cyberspies/cyberspies.html
   - Electronic Frontier Foundation: http://www.eff.org

- Communications Decency Act: http://www.eff.org/pub/Legal/Cases/ACLU_v_Reno
- Definite Digital Identity: http://www.eff.org/privacy.html

Video Surveillance

- Public Video Surveillance: Is It An Effective Crime Prevention Tool?: http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/05

Drug Testing

- Corporate Drug Testing: http://www.corporatedrugtesting.com
- International Drug Testing Systems: http://www.idtsinc.com
- U.S. Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Testing: http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Safety/DrugAlcoholTesting/Drug_and_Alc.stm

Police Surveillance, Including Search and Seizure

- About.com: Search and Seizure: http://civilliberty.about.com/newsissues/civilliberty/cs/searchandseizure/index.htm

Racial Profiling

- About.com: Racial Profiling: http://racerelations.about.com/newsissues/racerelations/cs/racialprofiling/index.htm

8. Hold a brief class discussion on students' research findings. What are the major privacy-related issues they've found? What do students feel are the most pressing issues? Which entities, government or corporate, do they feel pose the greatest threats to individual privacy? Do they evaluate both the same?

9. Divide the class into groups of approximately four students each. Ask each group to choose one of the privacy issues they've learned about or assign each group a specific issue. Try to divide the issues so that groups cover a variety of topics; you don't want every group to cover drug testing or Internet privacy. Have groups prepare scenes to perform in front of the class. Scenes need to include a variety of viewpoints on the issues and must contain a reference to *1984*. Group members should portray characters discussing and debating the group's specific privacy-related issue. Each scene should be no more than five minutes long. Here's a sample scenario:

> An employee has been fired. The reason for the firing is that she allegedly arrived at work late too many times, but she's recently discovered that her boss read several of her supposedly private e-mails, in which she spoke of the boss in an unflattering manner.

The characters could include the fired employee, the employee's lawyer, the boss, and the manager who wrote the company's e-mail policy. Either the employee or her lawyer would, in the course of their conversations with the other characters, make a statement comparing the scenario to something that might have happened in *1984*.As an alternative, the boss or manager

could make a statement explaining how the company's policy differs from the those described in *1984*.

10. Have students perform their scenes in front of the class. After each performance, have the class briefly summarize the issues raised in the scene.

11. After all groups have performed, assign for homework the paragraph in the Take-Home Activity Sheet: A Question of Privacy.

Adaptation for younger or older students:
Although younger students may not have read *1984*, this activity could be adapted to introduce issues of freedom, privacy, individualism versus the state, and big government. Discuss the different issues that affect the society's privacy, such as video surveillance, drug testing, police surveillance, and racial profiling. Have students get into groups and hypothesize the reasons why these policies and practices are in place. Can they think of any positive reasons for having these policies? Ask students to brainstorm privacy issues that affect young people, such as cybersurveillance or locker searches. Have groups perform scenes in which they act out freedom or privacy infringement scenarios that have happened to them or that are realistic for people their age. Discuss the scenes and the related policies with the class and make sure they understand that not all policies are random and although some are certainly unfair, most have arguably legitimate purposes.

Questions:

1. Compare and contrast the concepts of technological surveillance that Orwell envisioned in *1984* and the forms of technological surveillance that are used today.

2. Discuss the reasons why some people might not be bothered by the same alleged invasions of privacy that deeply concern other people. For example, why do some people take greater issue with employee drug testing than others do?

3. What would the U.S. Founding Fathers have said about some of the privacy-related issues that are being debated today?

4. Debate whether the impact of a privacy violation differs if the policy is implemented by a government or by a corporation. Does it matter who is violating your privacy?

5. Discuss the ways in which the news media may shape opinions regarding privacy issues. For example, what might be the effects of a nightly news feature that discusses economic losses due to employee drug abuse? What if it featured an employee who had a false positive drug test and was subsequently fired?

6. Explain the ways in which an Orwellian society, with a severe lack of personal privacy and freedom, could develop in both a communist and a capitalist society.

Evaluation

Students should participate in their groups, follow all directions, and demonstrate a careful consideration of the privacy issues raised in the novel and in contemporary debates. Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson:

Three points: Student displays exemplary performance or effort.
Two points: Student displays average performance or effort.
One point: Student displays minimal performance or effort.

Students will be graded upon the following:

- Participation in class discussions and note taking
- Working cooperatively and efficiently in groups
- Thorough completion of the Privacy Research and A Question of Privacy Activity Sheets
- Serious contemplation in skit creation and role participation in the scene
- Demonstrated understanding of the privacy issues presented by the student in the scene

Extension ideas:

Your Rights at School and Home

Have students research the laws and policies that affect their own rights at school and at home. They should look for answers to these questions:

- What are the limitations to your privacy and other rights at school?
- How do your rights at school compare to your rights outside of school?
- What are the justifications for treating you differently at school than when you're outside of school?
- What recent court decisions regard this issue?
- What rights do your parents have that can affect what you do at home? Do their rights differ when you're away from home?

Have students think of examples in which they or their friends were treated differently at school than they would have been outside of school. For example, they may know someone who's had his or her locker searched, or they may be aware of the school's Internet filtering software that excludes them from certain Web sites. Discuss these issues and have them list the pros and cons of each of the school policies that permit these privacy restrictions. Make sure they pay careful attention to the justifications for these policies while proclaiming their dissatisfaction with them.

Privacy and the Bill of Rights

Have students take turns reading the Bill of Rights out loud. Is the word "privacy" mentioned at all? Which amendment(s) seem to deal most directly with the issue of privacy? Have students research recent court cases related to the Fourth Amendment to find out what the justice system is saying about our rights under this amendment. Ask them to role-play privacy-related hearings before the U.S. Supreme Court, with some students playing the justices and others playing attorneys and witnesses.

Suggested Readings:

Free Speech: From Newspapers to Music Lyrics
Karen Zeinert., Enslow, 1995.
Freedom of Speech is guaranteed by the Constitution, yet there are trends in our society that bring to mind Orwell's Thought Police. Movie and music censors, "political correctness," monolithic ownership of news outlets, and other attempts to control what we speak and what we hear are covered by the author of this timely book.

George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four
This entry in the Bloom's Notes series includes a brief biography of George Orwell, an examination of the themes and structure of the novel, and excerpts of analytical essays by other writers.

Web Links:

Homework Center Mission
This public library site explores the issue of banned books and censorship in general. The links are most valuable to pursue discussion topics presented in this lesson.
http://www.multnomah.lib.or.us/lib/homework/lithc.html

American Civil Liberties Union

This is the official website for the ACLU, an organization that is "the nation's foremost advocate of individual rights...." The site, with its many features, offers support material for almost all the privacy issues presented in this lesson.
http://www.aclu.org/

Britannica.com-Orwell
This encyclopedia article begins with background on Orwell and his works, then offers direct links to other Britannica articles on 1984 and the many facets of the novel. There is solid information, analysis, and criticism here.
http://www.britannica.com/seo/g/george-orwell/

Vocabulary:

cookie
Definition: Small data files placed on a computer's hard drive after a computer user visits certain Web sites.
Context: She was concerned that some companies might try to figure out how long she spent at their Web sites and which pages she visited. Because she thought this information was none of their business, she disabled her Web browser's ability to accept cookies.

racial profiling
Definition: The act of defining members of a particular racial group (or minorities in general) as being more likely than average to be engaged in illegal activities.
Context: The police department's practice of racial profiling has angered many residents, particularly members of the minority community, who feel they are being unfairly singled out for searches.

search and seizure
Definition: The act of looking for, locating, and removing material, usually illegal possessions or potential evidence of a crime; generally used to describe the power of the police or other government officials to locate and remove evidence from a person's body or property.
Context: His lawyers will argue that the police conducted an illegal search and seizure when they searched his house without a warrant and took certain items as evidence.

Stalinism
Definition: The theory and practice of communism developed by Josef Stalin from Marxism/Leninism and characterized by rigid authoritarianism, widespread use of terror, and often by emphasis on nationalism.
Context: Many people who denounce the evils of communism are primarily thinking of Stalinism, in which Josef Stalin formulated Marxist/Leninist doctrine into a rigid and brutal totalitarian government.

surveillance
Definition: A close watch kept over someone or something.
Context: The convenience store manager has just purchased an expensive new surveillance system, which will capture all customers' activities on video and automatically phone the police if it detects an object in the shape of a gun.

Academic standards:

Grade level:
9-12
Subject area:
Civics
Standard:
Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.
Benchmark:
Understands the importance to individuals and to society of personal rights such as freedom of thought and conscience, privacy and personal autonomy, and the right to due process of law and equal protection of the law.

Grade level:
9-12
Subject area:
World History
Standard:
Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up.
Benchmark:
Understands the impact of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (e.g., the effects of United States and Soviet competition for influence or dominance on such countries as Egypt, Iran, the Congo, Vietnam, Chile, and Guatemala; the impact of the Cold War on art, literature, and popular culture around the world).

Grade Level:
9-12
Subject Area:
Language Arts
Standard:
Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.
Benchmark:
Understands the philosophical assumptions and basic beliefs underlying an author's work (e.g., point of view, attitude, and values conveyed by specific language; clarity and consistency of political assumptions).

Credit:
Betsy Hedberg, freelance curriculum writer and teacher.

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Privacy Research

As you conduct your in-class research on privacy issues, record your findings in this table.

Issue	In what ways is privacy allegedly being violated?	What are the justifications for this violation of privacy?	Who's implementing the privacy-invading measures: the government, corporations, or both?

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A Question of Privacy

Write a paragraph answering the following questions:

- What do you think is the most important privacy-related issue in today's society?
- How does this issue affect you?
- Are the privacy-related themes in 1984 still relevant today? Provide examples from the novel and from your experiences in and knowledge of today's society.

Video Information and Comprehension Questions

Video Description
George Orwell's bleak vision of the future was a world dominated by television screens that monitor lives and control minds, suppressing individualism. Nothing to worry about in the "land of the free," right?

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Download Comprehension Questions & Answers ▶

The Comprehension Questions are available to download as an RTF file. You can save the file to your desktop and open it in a word processing program.

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1984

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. What are the names of the three superpowers into which Orwell divides the world in 1984, and which nations make up these superpowers?
The world is divided into Oceania, made up of England and the United States;Eurasia, composed of the U.S.S.R.; and Eastasia, made up of China and its allies.

2. What dual role does television play in the world of 1984?
Television is a tool for the constant spread of government propaganda. It also serves as a spying device that allows surveillance operators to monitor the behavior of targeted citizens.

3. What department within the government's INGSOC division does Winston Smith work for, and what exactly does his work entail?
Winston Smith works for the Ministry of Truth, where he literally rewrites history and destroys previous accounts by wadding them up and discarding them in the "memory hole."

4. How does the narrator help contemporary viewers understand *1984's* important "two minutes hate" feature of the daily news?
The narrator explains that Orwell was tapping into the tendency of all societies to mark "hate" targets. The commentator presents Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden as examples of such targets in the West today.

5. What unexpected event marks the turning point in Winston Smith's routinized and controlled life, an event that adds welcome variety but dangerous risk as well?
Winston Smith unexpectedly bumps into Julia, a young woman who has staged a clumsy fall in the street in order to slip him a note. This is the beginning of a clandestine love affair.

6. How does the narrator link the Orwellian nightmare world of 1984 with today's Internet technology?
He links the loss of privacy in *1984* with the potential (and, some would argue, very real)

loss of privacy we face as information technology tracks and monitors our choices, buying patterns, and so forth.

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TITLE OF VIDEO:
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